

Color, Emotion and Behavioral Intentions in City Hotel Guestrooms

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the influence of colors on people's emotion and behavioral intentions in a real world city hotel guestroom. The conceptual framework of the study is based on the Mehrabian- Russell model. A field study approach is used and conducted with three different sample groups for three different colors, which are blue, yellow and grey. The study is carried out in two phases. This experimental procedure is repeated for each color scheme in the same hotel guestroom with different participants. The results indicate that blue and yellow are associated with pleasure and arousal, whereas grey color evokes displeasure and no arousal. Moreover, yellow and blue are found to reveal approach behavior, while the color grey is found to evoke avoidance behavior in city hotel guestrooms. The results of this study can be useful for interior architects, designers and hoteliers who put emphasis on touching guests' emotions and behavioral intentions to meet guest expectations, enhance hotelier's satisfaction and guest's loyalty.

KEYWORDS: Behavioral Intentions, Colors, Emotions.

INTRODUCTION

By increasing satisfaction or quality standards, hospitality managers begin to pay particular attention to touching guests' emotions and loyalty intentions to raise their profits and return to purchase (Ganesh et. al., 2000). According to recent studies, no matter how lavish the lobby or restaurant; architecture, décor and furnishing of the guestrooms are the most important places to retain customers and are the most influential spaces for in terms of affecting their emotions in different ways and prime consideration for return patronage (Doswell & Gamble, 1979; Jusko, 1991; Nobles, 1999; Ogle, 2009). With regard to loyalty intention and eliciting positive emotions of the customer, previous studies also indicate that visual element like color is the most dominant sense in humans (Special Sense Organs, 2002) and this supported by the view that we live in a visually oriented world in which the great majority of our attention is set sight on what we can see (Suzuki, 2002). Although a few similar studies related to visual elements on customer's emotions and behaviors have been conducted in different consumer studies, hospitality researchers have given little importance to comprehending how the environmental stimuli affect customers' emotions and behaviors in hospitality industry, particularly in city hotel guestroom context. Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand the effect of colors on people's emotional states and behavioral intentions in a real world city hotel guestroom.

THEORY

In order to examine the effect of different color schemes on guests' emotional state and behavioral intentions in city hotel guestrooms, Mehrabian & Russell (1974) model is used as a theoretical framework. The framework of the study is formed by three parts: environmental stimuli, emotional states and behavioral intentions (*see Figure 1*).

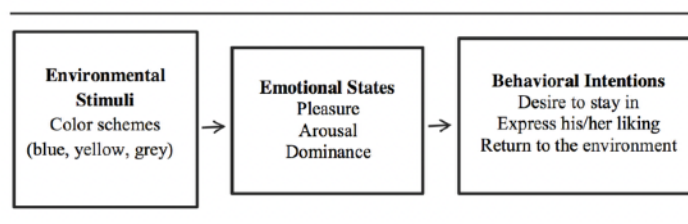


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the study.

According to the Mehrabian-Russell Model (1974), people are stimulated by the environmental stimuli such as lighting, color, scent, noise etc. In this study, yellow as warm, blue as cool and grey as achromatic color schemes are the environmental stimuli. These stimuli are thought to elicit emotional responses in people as pleasure, arousal and dominance. Pleasure states the degree to which a person feels happy, pleased, good, or joyful in the physical environment, while arousal symbolize the extent to which a person feels active, relaxed or stimulated. Dominance is identified as the degree to which a person feels important, influential, or in control (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). However, in subsequent studies, dominance factor have not been used as an emotional response (Russell & Pratt, 1980). According to Russell (1975), dominance is not an important effect on emotion and behavior and it is more related with the cognitive response. Therefore, in this study, dominance state is not taken into consideration while analyzing the effect of color schemes on emotional state. The characteristics of behavioral intentions are congruously linked with the aspects of approach-avoidance behavior, which is the third component of the M-R model. Approach behavior is identified as staying longer, exploring, interacting with other people in the physical environment or coming back, and avoidance behavior refers to opposite of approach behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In this study, desiring to stay in the environment, expressing his/her liking for environment and returning to the environment are taken into consideration to understand the effects of color schemes on behavioral intentions in terms of loyalty in city hotel guestrooms.

EXPERIMENTAL

The experiment setting was an executive room of Marina Sentido Suites in Kuşadası, Turkey. Each area has a simple decoration. Achromatic color scheme, which is a tone of grey as being lack of hue, dominates the room and there is no color effect introduced by hotel room itself, except from the pillows and bedspread. In order to control the possible effects of daylighting on perception of color schemes, all windows of the room are covered with thick and black paperboards for preventing the daylight. Artificial lighting was chosen as an only lighting method in the experiment. It is also kept the same during the experiment process for all color schemes. During the experiment, the identical settings were arranged with three different color schemes through changing bedspreads and pillows in the same city hotel guestroom. S3040-B blue bedspread and pillows were used as cool color scheme for the first experiment setting, S3040-Y10R yellow bedspread and pillows were used as warm color scheme for the second experiment setting and S3502-Y grey bedspread and pillows were used as a control color scheme for the third experiment setting (*see Figure 2*).

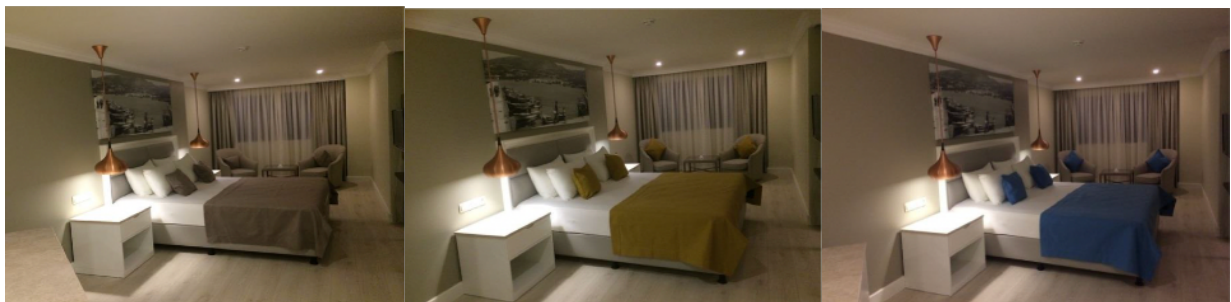


Figure 2: The grey, yellow and blue color schemes in the experiment hotel room.

The experiment was performed with different sample groups for the three different color schemes in the same experiment room among different dates. Voluntary participants were chosen by snowball sampling method. The data collection instrument for this study is a self-administrated questionnaire. First part is the demographic information part; second part is the measurement for emotional states (pleasure and arousal states) based on Mehrabian and Russell's PAD model; third part is the measurement for behavioral intentions (approach and avoidance) also based on Mehrabian and Russell's PAD model according to the hotel room setting and the question model is adapted from previous studies (Bitner, 1992; Pae, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kruskall Wallis- H test and Mann- Whitney U test were used to evaluate the effects of different color schemes on people's emotional states. In order to understand how pleasure and arousal states were affected by color schemes, the mean values for all color schemes were compared. The results showed that there was not a significant difference between the effects of cool and warm color schemes on pleasure state, whereas

there was a significant difference between the effect of achromatic and chromatic colors. Although blue color and yellow color are found as pleasant, grey color scheme is found as unpleasant in city hotel rooms. These results are in line with the previous findings, which indicate that cool color environments such as blues and greens are found as pleasant (Bellizzi et. al., 1983; Clarke & Costall, 2008; Hemphill, 1996; Kaya & Epps, 2004; Manav, 2007; Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994; Yildirim et. al., 2011). In the studies, blue is generally associated with pleasure in all circumstances. On the other hand, these results are not in line with the previous findings which emphasize that warm colors are associated with lower levels of pleasantness (Ainsworth et. al., 1993; Bellizzi et. al., 1983; Kwallek et. al., 1997; Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994) and which state that emotionally grey is lacking emotion (Clarke & Costall, 2008; Hemphill, 1996; Kaya & Epps, 2004; Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994). The reason why yellow is observed as pleasant can be related with the type of hotel. Moreover, it was found that there is a significant difference between the effects of chromatic and achromatic color schemes on arousal state. Although yellow color scheme is found arousing, grey color scheme is found unarousing in city hotel guestrooms. Blue is found as too close to either arousal or no arousal. It is also indicated that this is very close to mid-point so does not mean an unarousal state but neither aroused nor unaroused state. These finding also supports previous researches which demonstrate that emotionally warm colors have been linked with arousal whereas cool colors are prone to reveal lower levels of arousal (Ainsworth, et al., 1993; Kwallek, et. al., 1997; Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994; Yildirim et. al., 2011). Moreover, the results are different from the achromatic color studies which mention that achromatic colors are considered as lacking emotion neither arousal nor unarousal whereas as in this study grey was associated with unarousal, low arousal state (Clarke & Costall, 2008; Kaya & Epps, 2004; Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994). The reason why the result is different from these studies could be related with the participant groups, cultural background or methods. In addition to these, the results demonstrated that there was not a significant difference between the effect of blue color scheme and yellow color scheme on people's behavioral intentions. However, there was a significant difference between blue and grey color schemes and yellow and grey color schemes on people's behavioral intentions in city hotel guestrooms. Yellow and blue colors were found to cause approach behavior in city hotel guestrooms, while grey color was found to reveal avoidance behavior. The result is analogous to the work of Barlı et al. (2012), Babin et al. (2003), Bellizzi et al. (1983). On the other hand, the results are not in line with the previous studies done by Bellizzi & Hite (1992) and Özmen (2014). The difference from these results could be due to building types.

CONCLUSION

The effects of colors on people's emotional states and behavioral intentions and the effect of emotional states on behavioral intentions are explored in this study. The results of this study play a significant role in filling the gap in the literature about the effects of color in hospitality context. Since, there are not many studies combining color, emotion and behavioral intentions in a hospitality context. Moreover, there are not many researches done in real world city hotel guestrooms. Therefore, the results of this study can be useful for interior architects, designers and hoteliers who lay emphasis on touching guests' emotions and approach behavior in terms of loyalty to enhance their profits and return to purchase by creating expected color schemes. In future studies, a similar experiment can be carried out in different city hotels in different cities by comparing different city hotels with different guest populations in order to increase the generalization. And also, the influence of colors different from the ones used in this experiment can be analyzed.

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